



The University of Minnesota

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DIVISION

Special Bulletin No. 61

University Farm, St. Paul

April, 1922

Published by the University of Minnesota, College of Agriculture, Extension Division, F. W. Peck, Director, and distributed in furtherance of the purposes of the cooperative agricultural extension work provided for in the Act of Congress of May 8, 1914.

FARM BUREAU UNITS, THE RURAL COMMUNITY, AND THE EXTENSION SERVICE

By W. J. Corwin

Division of Agricultural Extension

The township units of the County Farm Bureau are convenient groupings of the members for better representation through their own director on the County Farm Bureau Board. A member joins the County Farm Bureau and is classified in the township where he resides.

From the standpoint of organization, government, representation, and opportunity for the members to express themselves on certain questions, the township unit director plan is very suitable as the basis of a County Farm Bureau organization since the township lines are definitely known to every one.

In prosecuting extension work within the county it is often desirable to group two or more townships in which the majority of members are interested in the same projects. The projects can thus be pushed with more force and enthusiasm and the agent can frequently serve this group at one meeting and economize time and expense.

The map of Waseca County, Figure 1, shows the twelve township units and their meeting places (marked X.) This map also shows the main community centers (marked O) and their general area (bounded by dotted lines.) These general community boundaries are not fixed according to trade areas alone, banking areas alone, the school, the creamery, the elevator, or the social areas alone; but rather upon a reasonable combination of all these factors as known to the county agent who has worked in the county for eight years. These community boundaries, then, are not definite

or stationary lines, and from the community standpoint there are outside areas which might be termed "no man's land," places where, like the headwater of several rivers, the interest is diverted in many directions. Some time in the future, through the influence of a changed population; a changed business relationship; a changed social, church, or school relationship; a changed soil resource; or a changed means of travel and communication; these ungrouped areas will either develop into smaller communities with another common center, or they will be absorbed by the already existing communities. The future may record changes in both directions.

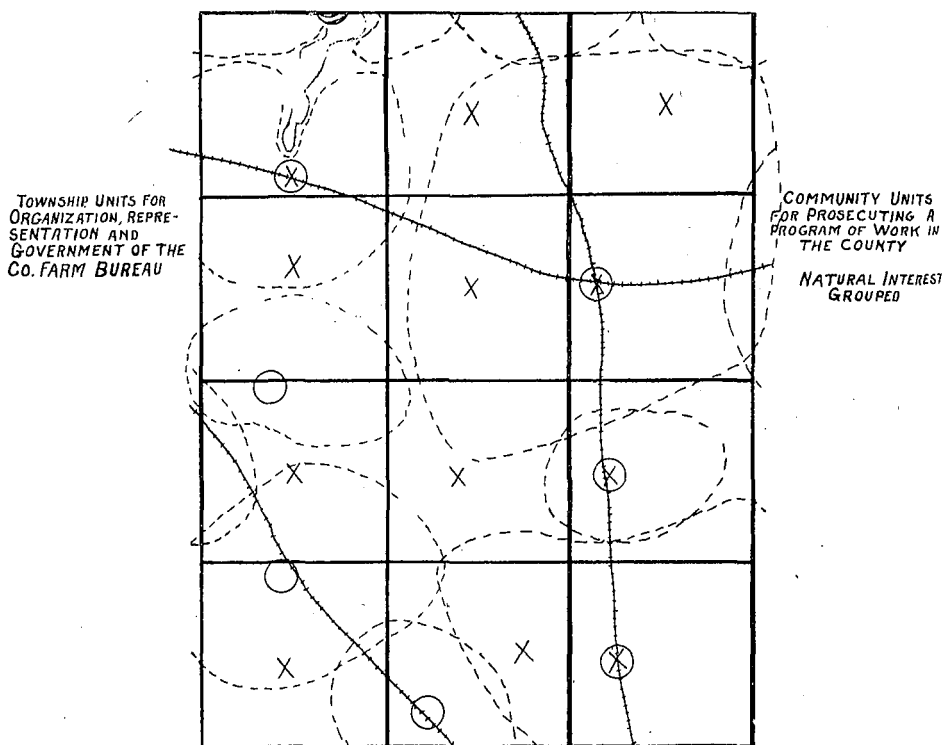


Fig. 1. Township and Community Areas, Waseca County, Minn. Community areas are based on a reasonable combination of business, social, and educational relationships.

TWO VIEWPOINTS NECESSARY

Community areas are less stable and less uniform than township areas (see Figure 1). Community areas vary with changes in human relationships and in the average mind are geographically undefined. So from the Farm Bureau and Extension Work point of view both the township and community units should be kept

in mind, especially where the Farm Bureau organization is now on the township basis. The former serves as a basis for a fairly uniform organization, government, and representation in the Farm Bureau organization. The latter serves as a rather natural, convenient and economical grouping of interests for prosecuting the county program of extension work. See Figure 1.

COMMUNITY DEFINED

A community is not a certain group or class of people. A community is the sum total of all the people living, working, and trading about a certain center, having common interests in and all contributing to whatever progress is made. Within the area of this definition may be sub-communities or neighborhoods and incorporated villages, but each shares in and is responsible for the welfare and development of the whole community. Farmers' clubs, commercial clubs, granges, aid societies, churches, schools, creameries, farms, banks, stores—all these are parts of a community of interdependent human relationships. A community embodies a larger variety of human interests than does a single neighborhood.

HOW DO THE LOCAL UNITS SERVE?

1. The local units of the Farm Bureau serve as agencies for Extension work in developing a permanent and profitable system of farming.

A more profitable business throughout the unit is dependent upon the majority following the farm practices best adapted to the locality. The practices followed in any locality reflect the average opinions and judgment of that locality. Therefore the best ideas and judgment should be combined and better standards erected with the idea of crystallizing the community's opinion around better business methods on each farm and around progressive coöperation between farmers. In 1920, on the statistical route in Steele County, one farmer produced 100 pounds of pork for \$7 while another under similar conditions produced 100 pounds for \$20. Dairymen were found receiving from 4 to 52 cents per hour for their labor of milking over and above all costs of feed, depreciation, etc. The unit activities capitalize this information in community progress toward efficient production, efficient marketing, and a conserved soil resource, three elements which are fundamental in making the business of Agriculture permanent.

2. The local Farm Bureau units help improve the rural standards of living.

Individuals and neighborhood groups are brought together, thereby broadening their viewpoints toward their interdependent

business relationships as well as their social and educational responsibilities. This larger acquaintance, this interchange of ideas, and the larger contacts with the outside world through the Farm Bureau organization—all these beget mutual confidence, lay the foundation for better coöperation, and stimulate a stronger desire for as good rural living conditions as better farming methods will provide. In some localities where there never has been a farmers' club, a grange, or other organization for bringing people together, the local units serve to create a healthier social atmosphere as a prerequisite to more profitable farm practice and better living conditions.

3. The local Farm Bureau units help to develop more local leadership.

A recent survey of sixteen counties having a total of 255 local units showed 112 classed as active, 97 as semi-active, and 46 as dormant, when judged on the following basis:

Active unit—Projects in progress or busy on something.

Semi-active unit—No projects in progress but good interest and ready to start.

Dormant unit—Inexperienced; no constructive local leadership.

This indicates that some effort is needed to raise the dormant and semi-active units into the active or semi-active classes. But the units and their elected officers and committeemen furnish the medium for this effort. Many capable people fail to become good local leaders because of their unwillingness to do something for the community without immediate remuneration. On the other hand, good leadership is often made impossible because the majority fail to back up and coöperate with the leaders they have chosen. In these sixteen counties are some striking examples of individual and collective ability being drawn out and developed through the unit's activities on local problems. For instance, one unit committeeman on dairy marketing got interested at a county meeting, was made delegate to the state meeting, and was there made one of the state directors and officers, all because he was discovered, chosen, and developed locally so that he could take an intelligent part in the state meeting. Good leadership in rural affairs is needed and the local units bring more men into service. The county agents sometimes say this or that man is learning to handle a meeting very well but that he was rather awkward at first.

4. The local Farm Bureau units help modernize the farm business and the farmers' business relationships.

Other forms of industry have made advancement in their methods of business and in their commercial and credit organizations—until now they are relatively several decades ahead of the agricultural industry. The work now being done by the active local units is helping Agriculture to catch up in its business methods both as regards efficient production and efficient marketing.

The outstanding local problems are being lined up and attacked with the best judgment and advice they can muster. The demonstration method of applying practical information is being followed in the most active units. Locally these units are determining the better varieties of crops, the better methods of marketing, the better conveniences for home and field, the better crop plans and rotations, the better methods of feeding, the better methods of pest control, the better methods of livestock improvement, the better methods of finance, the better methods of grading and packing products for marketing, and the better methods of co-operation. As these matters are determined, the active units are using the public press and public opinion to make these practices more general in the locality. Activities like the above mean modernization of the farming business.

LIVE, ACTIVE, AND SERVICEABLE UNITS

Organized groups of people, like the individual, are useful only when they are actively engaged in something constructive for their community. Active participation in the affairs of progress and development creates enthusiasm and makes for greater satisfaction, both individually and collectively.

Because members and committees of dormant units are inactive, they are likely to feel that the whole organization is likewise inactive. When a machine stands idly exposed to the weather, it soon becomes worthless through non-use, rust, and decay. Organizations should be, and most of them are, groups of society so co-ordinated that they can the better promote the general welfare of the community. Nothing is more degenerating to any organization than to lie in that dormant state, exposed to the weathering effect of inaction and misrepresentation.

Actively engaging the units on their own local problems, keeping the members thoroly informed on what is being done, calling meetings for specific action only, arranging definite projects and demonstrations, and maintaining good publicity and information mediums between the members and the county agent—all these are essential factors in keeping the activities alive, serviceable, and constructive in their scope.

YOUR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

The object of the Agricultural Extension service is to help develop and maintain a desirable and permanent system of agriculture within the state. The County Farm Bureau is an association of local people organized and incorporated under state law for the express purpose of coöperating with the University and the

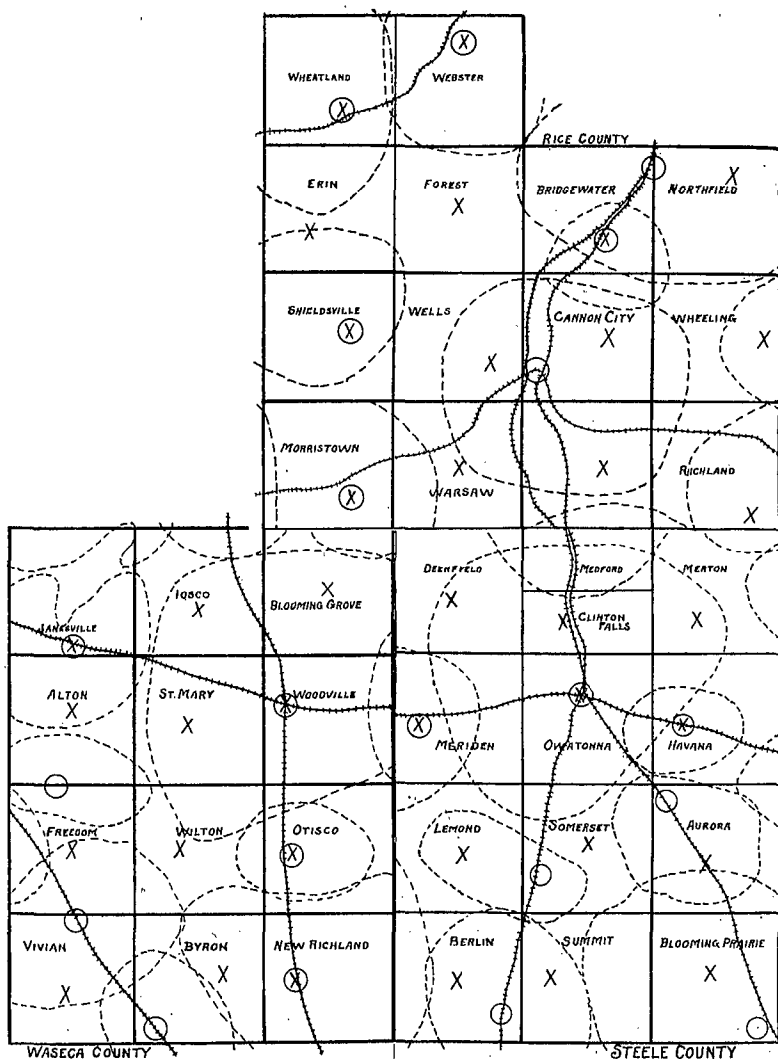


Fig. 2. General Community Areas of Waseca, Steele, and Rice Counties. These community areas were outlined separately for each county by the respective county agents in answer to certain questions by the writer. Note in a general way how the agents' judgment and knowledge of the communities conform when the three county maps are placed together. Note also that there seems to be certain centers through which the business and larger social and educational relationships pass.

X Township Meeting Places.

O General Community Centers.

United States Department of Agriculture in developing a better farm business, better standards of living, and better communities in which to live and work. County agents are hired jointly by the county association and the state, representing also the federal department, to stimulate development along these lines. The county officers and committees help to direct the work on local problems.

The University and the United States Department, through state and district leaders, assist the county agents and local committees in planning and carrying forward whatever work is needed or desired. The extension division further arranges the services of special help to coöperate on district or state-wide problems. The County Farm Bureau, therefore, serves as a local organization through which this work can be carried to every community and neighborhood in the county.

Topics Discussed at Meetings

In attending community or township unit meetings, one notes a wide range of topics being discussed, to the advantage of the community:

Potato marketing, diseases, and improvement; silos; cow testing; pooling feed orders; Bessette Land Clearing Law; brush burning; freight rates; cream grading and butter marketing in carlots; poultry houses, feeding and management; cooperative egg marketing; explosives for land clearing; community fairs, picnics, socials, ball teams, spelling matches, orchestra, debates; business and professional needs of the community; legumes for soil improvement and for feed; peat soil problems, drainage and use of phosphate; purebred sires and bull associations; livestock disease control; corn varieties; farm credits and loans; farm leases and accounts; small grain varieties; insurance; care of work horses; calf feeding; local cooperative marketing; weed control; fruit spraying; tuberculosis testing; progress of club work; fertilizer tests; plans for tours on silos, feeding demonstrations, farm buildings, etc.; conveniences; attractive farm homes; balancing family rations; school problems; and value and use of certified seed.

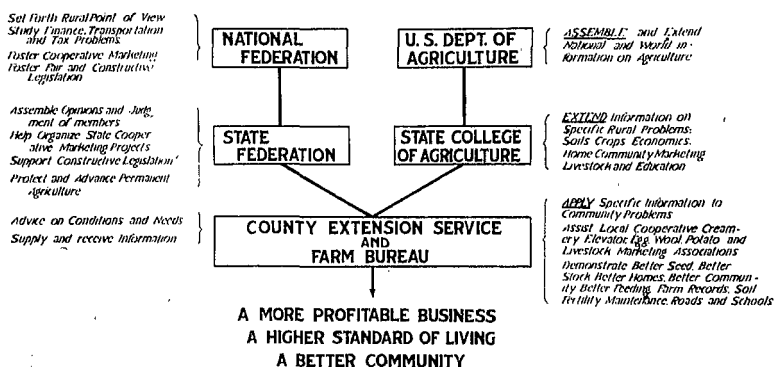
Projects Under Way

A summary of the projects under way or completed likewise includes a wide range of interests. Every community has some progressive leaders who are willing to try out or demonstrate the desirability of certain methods or practices under their local conditions. The following are projects or demonstrations that are being worked upon:

Potato standardization, pooling orders for standard seeds and spray material; legumes for soil improvement and for feed; fertilizer

and lime plots; corn variety tests; poultry culling; variety tests for small grains; tuberculosis testing and disease control; buying cream on a graded basis; seed treatment campaign; better stock and better feeding campaign; cooperative egg marketing; community crop shows; development of certified seed; hog, dairy, beef, and poultry feeding demonstrations; poultry house construction; farm ventilation; house and barn water supply; labor saving methods and machinery for the home; food preservation; recreation centers; land clearing; cooperative bull associations and cow testing associations; home-made silos; and windbreaks.

THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE AND THE FARM BUREAU MOVEMENT



Connection between the County Extension work and the college and U. S. Departments is through the County Agent and laws authorizing the work.

Connection between the County farm bureaus and the Federation of county bureaus is through an elected delegate from each county farm bureau.

RURAL ORGANIZATION AND PERMANENT AGRICULTURE

The rural economic, social, and educational problems need efficient organizations to better meet the national demands for a permanent agriculture. No nation has long held a prominent place without access to or reliance upon agricultural resources. Better organization among rural people is essential properly to develop and maintain our soil resources, to enable one third of our population to meet the food requirements of one hundred ten million people and at the same time produce adequate return on the labor and capital involved. The organization needed must not only be sound and constructive, but it must be guided by broad-minded unselfish leaders who possess a vision for the future and who have the rural point of view.